

# Self-esteem key to treating mental health

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Improving how mental health patients perceive themselves could be critical in treating them, according to a study from the University of Waterloo.

The study found that [youth](#) with psychiatric disorders currently receiving inpatient services reported lower self-concept, particularly global self-worth, compared to those receiving outpatient services.

"This was the first study that examined youth with psychiatric disorder by comparing what type of service they were receiving and whether that was associated with self-concept," said Mark Ferro, the Canada Research Chair in Youth Mental Health and an assistant professor in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at Waterloo. "We know that global self-worth is lower in the inpatient group and we know from other research that lower self-concept is a precursor to other more serious [mental health problems](#)."

The study examined 47 youth aged 8-17 years who were receiving inpatient and outpatient psychiatric services at McMaster's Children Hospital in Hamilton. The participants' self-concept was measured using the Self-Perception Profile for Children and Adolescents.

Self-concept might be an important aspect to consider when implementing treatment programs to improve the mental [health](#) of youth who are hospitalized.

"Because youths who are in the inpatient service have a lower self-

concept, therapies within their overall treatment program aiming to improve self-worth might be worthwhile," Ferro said. "Interventions to improve an individual's self-concept or self-perception would be complementary to some of the more pressing needs within child and youth inpatient psychiatric services."

The study, which was undertaken by Ferro and Hamilton Health Sciences bursary student Chris Choi, was recently published in the *Journal of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*.

Provided by University of Waterloo

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